

Mikey Dread is one of the few Reggae artists who has managed to retain the feel of the original reggae sound and mix it with modern studio technology. His latest Obsession (Rykodisc) is slick as can be with synthesizers and drum machines, but somehow he makes the songs stand out. His laid-back singing remains funky, and he makes you care about the words. There are several standouts with "Modern Africa" the most intense, but it's hard to dismiss such catchy tunes as "Muscle Up" and "Love Encore." Only on "Livin' in the Jungle" does he approach the spooky hypnotic groove that the best reggae achieves, but he never loses you either. Hopefully, he'll have a real drummer in person.

Mikey Dread: Sat., Dec. 19 at 9:30 p.m. at the Chestnut Cabaret, 38th and Chestnut Sts., 382-1201.

--Peter Brown